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CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 19

No. 2 — Winter — 1955-56

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Canadian Poetry Magazine

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Manuscripts should be mailed to The Editor, Leo Cox, P.O. Box 821, Postal Station "B"—Montreal, P.Q., Canada.

FOUNDATION SUPPORTERS

It is, perhaps, unnecessary to state that a magazine such as this is not a profit making venture: It is published by The Canadian Authors Association for the encouragement of poetry in Canada and its continued appearance is only made possible by the generosity of its Foundation Supporters.

Contributions are needed and would be very welcome.

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The contents of this Quarterly are indexed in The Canadian Index, published by The Canadian Library Association.

CANADIAN
POETRY
MAGAZINE

Winter 1955-56

VOLUME 19 - - NUMBER 2

Committee:
EDITOR - - - - - LEO COX
P.O. Box 821, Postal Station B, Montreal, P.Q. Canada
Associate: - V. B. RHODENIZER, Acadia University, Wolfville, N.S.
Authorized as Second Class Mail, Post Office Department, Ottawa.

On the Sonnet:

"The hint, however, may convey my belief that the sonnet has possibilities of development in form, and my real joy at watching its revival of late in the practice of young poets, after an interval during which a very few — and of these Lord Alfred Douglas most signally — have kept its fine tradition alive. It went out of vogue largely through a surfeit of inferior stuff, aggravating the general post-war tendency against "form" and in favour of "content". Well, as for "content" or "subject", its whole history, from the Petrarcan theme of frustrated love to Milton's "trumpet" and Wordsworth's morality, should be augury against doubt of an elastic future. It is a lovely form to fit and hold lovely thoughts. It must not, however, be stretched to be compared uncritically, as some have done, in difficulty or impressiveness, with drama or epic, things of magnitude."

—from the preface to the 1935 edition of an anthology, "English Sonnets" edited by Sir A. T. Quiller-Couch ("Q")

—(Chapman & Hall, London).

FUGUE FOR TOMORROW

Now, let the rain fall on this quiet place
With tone subdued and soft,
Weaving with skill, compassionate and kind,
A counter-melody across this air
That rings with ruin's deafening solitude.

Out of this blood, these ashes, and these bones,
No mortal sound will ever rise again
To challenge desolation such as this.

Here is the graveyard where humanity,
Insistent on its own destruction, left
The terrible, last monument to man:
Oblivion that will not compromise.

Now, let the rain upon this quiet place
Become an elegy, subdued and soft,
While other planets, looking down across
Majestic stretches of infinity,
See how the golden pride that once grew tall
Lies buried in the dust . . .

Now, let the rain fall quietly,
And bless with tender hands
The heartbreak that is Earth.

Margaret Haley Carpenter,
Norfolk, Virginia.

DAMASCUS

At the foot of the snow-capped Anti-Lebanon
Range
Lies Damascus, the ancient,
Born of the desert sands
And the bubbling wells,
The seven palm-fringed, life-giving streams
of Baraba.
Here on the Street Called Straight
Still stands the wall
From which St. Paul in a basket
Escaped the Jews,
And fringing the selfsame centuries-travelled
way—
Mute proof that persecution
Still persists—
The squalid camps of Arab refugees
Huddle beneath the budding, straight-stemmed
poplars.

Damascus, the ancient,
In her youth like an houri,
Pearl of a sultan
Slim-limbed, golden-skinned
With eyes through her black veil
Like dark pools of promise,
Breasts rose-tipped to sweetness,
Thighs fashioned for love,
Damascus, the coveted,
Damascus the prize.

Crusader, Roman, Arab, Greek and Turk fought
for her,
Key to the east,
Door to the west was she:
Christian and Moslem, pagan, mystic, Jew
In turn possessed her:
Here in its primal rockbound underground hiding
Stands the earliest Christian church,
And here through the centuries resting
Saladin, nemesis of the Crusaders,
Restorer of the Holy Land to Islam.

In the Omayyad Mosque,
Printed in faded murals of purple and gold,
Carven in column and arch,
Runs the tale of the city:
A temple to Jupiter
Built in the heyday of Rome,
Converted to Christianity
Over the ages,
And now a Mohammedan mosque—
A Moslem mosque which shelters
Two pagan columns
And close to the altar the tomb and dust
of St. John.

Marjorie Freeman Campbell,
Aldershot, Ont.

NEGOTIATOR — 1855

He asked no quarter of the changing years,
He who had never bent the knee to man.
His fearless mind accepted pioneers
As patrons of some comprehensive plan.
But, to their mode of dress, he'd not subscribe,
Suspicious of new customs and their ills,
He wore the full regalia of his tribe,
Complete with wampum, deerskin robe and quills.
Yet, for his tribesmen's rights, he'd pledge secure
That Blackfeet drop their tomahawks and bows,
And, through the shining ploughshare, they'd procure
Their living from the land, as terms disclose.
He gave assent — chin lifted, dark eyes proud,
The deal was closed, but he remained unbowed.

Helen Hill Young,
Toronto, Ontario.

APPLE COUNTRY

Come where the land is an apple sliced through the core
With the red sun a stain at the rim.
Come where wind courses in sweet juice
Through fruit veins
Where brown-brindle seeds grow into jubilant trees
In stout hearted disregard of the weather.

Come where people cling like fruit
On a busy limb
Their cheeks polished by apple winds
Their arms stretched welcome-far
Gathering windfalls, encouraging trees . . .
For you they will unwrap clear words from a winter bin.

Bernice Ames,
Los Angeles, Cal.

WAVE-CHILL

shivered out of wave-chill, glimmering
water, boy-naked to a naked fear,
he water fresh, salt, oil-dulled, shimmering,
could never after waking bear

whose sleep is sure and swift with slipping
dreams through currents cold and clear
to where sleek sirens sings, salt water dripping
moon-pearls from their lambent hair.

Fred Cogswell,
Fredericton, N.B.

PASSAGE

It plunged below the soaring bird,
    Rolled with the futile aileron;
Transfinite as the primal surd
    The arc of that oblivion.

Black bars across the rose of dawn,
    Swayed grimly by a sombre flood,
Its epitaph was flashed upon
    The screen of every longitude.

Yet where the eternal arches climb,
    The wavelength of another flight
Had overpassed the ports of time
    And crashed the barriers of light.

Julia Grace Wales,
St. Andrews East, Que.

TRAITOR

She's weel respeckit i' the kirk
(She's mairrit to a clever birk,
Rowthy wi' siller),
Singin' the Psalms wi' godly grace,
A smirk sae smug upon her face,
A perfect pillar.

She's decked wi' furs an' jewelled rings;
Ablow the coonter buys her things
An' lauchs at laws.
An', while wi' pleesure she is thrang,
The war can wage baith lood an' lang,
It's no' *her* cause.

At nicht, when planes gang throbbin' by
To brave the hardships o' the sky
An' fecht the Huns,
She'll coorie doon an' sleep sae soond,
Her selfish hairt'll never stoond;
They're no' *her* sons.

Lavinia Derwent,
Glasgow, Scotland.

HAME ON LEAVE

Anither step or twa an' then
I'll hae a glimpse o' oor hoose-en'
Ayont the field;
Wi' twa-three roses on the wa',
Sheltered frae a' the wunds that blaw,
A canty beild.

I see the hairst's been unco fine
Though wrocht by ither haunds than mine;
But, hoots, I'll stook.
An' there's the hoose, sae trig an' fit.
Guidsakes', the parlour fire is lit.
Losh', wad ye look!

An' doon the road rins barkin' Ben—
He'd ken me 'mang a score o' men,
Or, 'deed, a hunner;
An' is that nither at the yett,
The bakin' dune, the table set?
I wadna wunner.

I'll sune forget ma fechtin' ploys
When ance I'm in ma corduroys.
Ben's still the same!
Anither yaird, an' then I'm there.
Aff wi' ma pack an' ilka care.
Mither', I'm hame.

Lavinia Derwent,
Glasgow, Scotland.

WHO THEN SHALL HEAR?

We are not conscious
that we breathe
till breath is short;
nor feel our feet
while swift on them we fly.
It seems as though
all sound
is part of us
till deafness comes,
and eyes are what we see
in faces
of our fellow-men,
till sight grows dim.

Denuded and alone,
who then will save us
in extremity?
Who then will hear
the crying
of the naked soul —
the tiny ego,
that was swathed
in human form?

Lilian S. Auty,
Toronto, Ont.

CREDO

Oh, there are those who say that when we die
our souls are dissipated in thin air,
and that our ashes, leached from where they lie,
feed weeds and trees and blossoms everywhere.
Others there are who pin their hopes upon
an after-life, with body wed to soul,
in all ways better, ampler than we've known —
but as for me I seek for neither goal.

Yet I believe if through Death's iron door
you were to come, in summer loveliness,
let's say, long after I had gone before,
the music of your coming, Sweet, would sow
desire in my dead bones, and restlessness,
and Love would plague me then, again, as now.

George Walton,
Regina, Sask.

VICTORIA STREET: AUTUMN DUSK

Red lights scrawled on the evening, the plane leaves falling,
Birds that fly leisurely down through the failing light,
That roost on the sooty grass; and the buses calling,
Scarlet cattle that low in the London night.
A vista of walls that leads from the steps of glory
Into the mournful dusk where the last leaves glide
Like loneliness, a dimly remembered story
To the beatified.

J. Phoenice,
Berwick-on-Tweed, England

THE MEETING POINT

Finally, it is only the contact of the spirit that matters.
We enter upon a pastelled land of softly-spoken waters .
Brilliance is out of place here.
Sunlight is filtered through pearl.
We have come a long way with empty hands.
Somewhere behind us we have left our gold and our jewels;
They are without meaning in this land of pensive trees.
Somewhere behind us we have forsaken joy,
And left sorrow huddled by the roadside.
Desire has slipped from our shoulders like a tattered cloak.
We remember them as we walk on the firm ground,
But they no longer hinder us.
We walk in white light, gentle to our eyes,
And there is a simple lightness to our feet.
We look at one another, and each is strangely beautiful.

Elfreida Read,
Vancouver, B.C.

SUBWAY SONG

Loop and sway, twist and turn!
The day has lives, not hours, to burn!
Through tunnels carved to soundless mirth,
Up from the midriff of the earth,
Root-white faces, groping, stare,
Receive the onslaught of the air.

From routine hyphen of the hours
Spent in various blocks and towers,
Clockworn features, servile brain,
Lift to sun, or wind, or rain;
Drink the sky's descending light,
Briefly bloom before the night.

R. H. Grenville,
Victoria, B.C.

THE PIKE

I take it he doesn't think at all,
But muscles his slippery fight, an engine
Green deep, powering his belly flash
In his water mother, his horizonless well;
The hooked gill the fault in the world
Of his will, his preying paradise.

Near enough to net I have him,
And the murk of his body is my fear
Of our meeting somehow equally.
He pauses on the strain of my line;
I have him netted, sluicing the air,
How pure brave my wet thrasher, my enemy .

John Bruce
Lucan, Ont.

STRONG SUIT

My suit has suffered all it can
At button, seam and sleeve;
The cloth has withered on the man,
The skin's outworn the weave.

Withered myself, what use to buy
A suit of lasting style,
Of faultless cut and fadeless dye?
I'll nurse the old awhile.

Soon I'll exchange it, tight or slack,
With elbows out or in,
Trade for the suit without a back,
Whose weave outwears the skin.

Raymond Hull,
Vancouver.

AT THE EXHIBITION

Twittering dowagers warble from floor to floor
self-conscious commentary; cognize mood, lay bare
impalpable shadow of the mind's intent.
"What's twenty-four?" Gloved fingers hurriedly
consult the catalogue.
"Figure With Stars". "Why, yes!
It strikes you, doesn't it?
I *do* like that!"

That crazy countryside of leaning sticks
baffles them not at all. In tailored suits
and neat, flat walking shoes they pass unscathed
between the seared, sliced faces; under eyes
rolling like moons through schizophrenic night.
"Oh, here are boats! I like the way he's used
vermilion here. Effective, don't you think?
See what it says, Louise, for thirty-nine".

"Boat Dock at Grenisle". "Let's concentrate
on boats next summer. We've done so many flowers".

R. H. Grenville,
Victoria, B.C.

PRAIRIE WIND

Here on the prairies there is a living wind,
A breath of things yet to be,
Undreamed of in the minds of men.
Here we are reduced to two elementals,
The earth and the sky,
And all else has no significance.
Here, man is as an ant
And his mightiest works are dwarfed
By the magnitude of the clouds.
Here is peace and turmoil,
Marvellously interwoven,
Here is the beginning and the end.

Annette Preston,
Lefroy, Ont.

BARE TREE

Now is my maple in the late year's half-sun
A black crisscross on the sky, now has the last blood
Dripped, the last flickering gold been shed.
It is stripped and undone.

Yesterday still a few leaves lingered, thinned
To wafer substance in the frosty wake, stem
Dry, frangible. Today the tree has delivered them
To the ravaging wind.

Tomorrow it will bear for foliage stars of winter,
Gems of snow, until on a day the black twigs spill
Their immaculate burden, and spring comes to fulfill
Its ancient indenture.

Myrtle Adams,
London, Ont.

Mr. SMITH MEETS Mr. CHARON ON THE LIBERTY STREET FERRY

Hadn't expected to meet you here.
I never thought this was your kind of ferry . . .
I guess I'm a romantic, but I'd imagined
Night and darkness or a masquerade.
I had expected you in a dark hood,
Or careless with a cane and formal dress;
Perhaps a plumed hat doffed at my expense
Or knowing eyes behind a velvet mask . . .
Not now, commuting, going home
Tired, monotonously unaware,
Submerged in crowds that ebb and rise beneath the sun
Each day the same.
It's sort of funny, isn't it?
I never thought of meeting you just anywhere,
But now I see you I can understand . . .
No one would notice you.
I must have passed you many times and never known;
Here, on the street, or in the yard at home.
A little man! That makes me want to laugh.
I'd always thought a villian or at least a dandy . . .
I guess we think too much about you in our lives,
Stage you too often in a melodrama,
Play our own hero, if only at the end
Of quiet lives.
Never dreamed you'd wear a business suit
Or walk and talk and look so much like me.
Here with the city at our back,
The New York harbor with the Jersey docks ahead,
I hardly thought you'd introduce yourself . . .
And no one could have picked you from the crowd.
I must say I'm amazed.
No sweeping gesture or sophisticated smile,
And even now I can't get used to it.

I'm almost disappointed. The least I had expected
Was that my watch would stop."

Frances Bardacke,
San Diego, Cal.

PASTEL PORTRAIT

With eye intent
And all her spirit bent
To create
With things inanimate;
The pastel dust
To her a God-like trust;
Her long deft fingers will
My likeness make;
All that she sees will wake
Boldly revealed,
What I may wish concealed,
The hidden fear
And many an unshed tear
She will encage
Upon the lifeless page;
All I have been
And am, and one day mean
To be anon
Enshrined when I am gone.

Margaret Hurdon Keifer.
Victoria, B.C.

AUTOS

Though it annul
    Trifling dimensions,
No hydramatic
    Can ease man's tensions.

No rocket motor
    Can race him from fear.
No windshield-wiper
    Makes vistas more clear.

Not greater horse-power,
    But spirit-might
Reveals horizons
    On roads of delight.

Louis Ginsberg,
Paterson, N.J.

RENASCENT

Somewhere along the way
I lost her —
That little girl
I was, in life's hey-day.

Somewhere on land or sea,
She left me —
The little girl
That once I used to be.

Entranced with life, with mind
Expanding,
Advancing,
I left her far behind.

The onward, upward strife,
Ambition,
Delusion,
Seemed no part of her life.

The oil of peace now spreading,
Life's tumult
Subsiding,
I hear her with me treading.

We have not walked apart;
That little girl,
I thought was lost,
Is nestling in my heart.

Ellen Scowcroft,
Victoria, B.C.

CENTAURS OF THE WIND

Down the long night centaurs of the wind
drive phantoms swiftly before them.
Canoe-forms race snarling white-foam clouds;
ghostly Indians guide through vapors truculent
as Death.
Jet-thunder sounds the buffalo stampeding
from his native habitat; as birds
sensing a coming change of season
might fill the skies with the drums
of departing.

Oh, in the night-long neighing, I hear other cries,
others leaving; as grasses, once green,
bending before the fierce consuming force
when white-hot flame of prairie-fire
hurries them away in wild uncharted flight;
like the hunted, struck to a frenzy of desire,
tumbling toward the slough's illusion of security.

Where are they gone? Answer me, night-winds. Answer!

So may I know where you shall drive my frail phantom
when it goes beyond the well-known plain,
beyond well-loved hills mounting the western rim.

Centaurs of the wind challenge as they go,
yet pause not, to make reply.

Marion Kathleen Henry,
Calgary, Alberta.

THE LIFE OF THE TREES

Stretched on a bank where green immensities
Of redwoods clustered in a shadowy zone,
I seemed to feel the consciousness of trees
Enter my bosom, and become my own.

Suddenly, like a rooted thing, I stood
With feet in earth, and leafy head borne high,
Soft-swaying with the steepled brotherhood
That brushed my shoulder under the canyon sky.

I felt the light, a benediction, flow;
I felt the breeze, with comradely rustling, pass,
The fog drift by, the darkness come and go,
Alone, yet merged with the great columned mass.

And time was endlessness of rain and dew,
Of dusk and dreaming, drowsiness and repose,
Amid whose slumberous length I scarcely knew
Of lithe small wanderers round my knotted toes.

They were but phantoms in a world of ghosts,
Who came, and flashed away, and seemed no more
Than dead leaves fluttering down and down in hosts
To silent burial on the forest floor.

Stanton A. Coblentz,
Mill Valley, California.

IN DECEMBER

July is an emerald
Caught in a froth
Of sea-spray.

Here, where white-caps
Ride the mountain-tops
And snow-spray hides the valley-floor,
I stand, and like a queen
I wear July's bright emerald,
Not in a diadem
But in my soul.

July is an emerald,
And in its shimmering depths
My winter-weary heart
Finds peace.

Bluebell Stewart Phillips,
St. Vincent-de-Paul, P.Q.

SOLITUDE

When first he stirred within the primordial womb
And groped his way toward the gleam of time
(As, in the shelter of the eventual tomb,
We grope our way toward the gleam of time)
He knew, without undue analysis,
That surely as he voiced his first shrill cry,
Through all his days a hunger would be his —
Austere, unfilled, clean as the bone is dry.
He knew that he must live with it and find
What nourishment he could in earth and breath.

And the sure foreknowledge of the instinctive mind
Did not betray him, neither in life nor death.
For when the birthling blood flowed free and red,
Thirst was his water, hunger was his bread.

Ruby Nichols,
Toronto, Ont.

FIR

Ultimate tree, the vision
Of innumerable minds —
Dark tree of mysterious whim
Hidden deep and tossed outward —
Tree, the vision of darkness
And pain beyond its upthrust point.

Soaring to swell
The imperturbable silence
Of its stance, the stance of rigid softness
Beneath the palms of branches,
Resting tightly against your hand.

Raise for us the strength of that solidness
Remade in evening hours
Remade in darkness
Into beloved shape —
Stalking the paths and lawns
With steady uncompromising steps,
That measure out events
Tipping the scales of justice
To the receiver.

Margaret Church,
Lafayette, Indiana.

NATIONAL TRIBUTE TO WILSON MacDONALD

On October 21, 1955, there was held in Hart House (University of Toronto) a public meeting in tribute to the poetic work of Wilson MacDonald. A large audience turned out to hear an address of eulogy by Dr. E. Crossley Hunter, a Toronto clergyman, and readings by the poet himself of selections from his best known verse. Sidney Melville, the baritone, sang a song for which both music and words were composed by MacDonald. Letters and telegrams of good wishes were read: including messages from the Governor-General, Prime Minister St. Laurent, and Hon. Leslie Frost, premier of Ontario. J. V. McAcree, the Toronto Globe & Mail columnist, published a tribute to him in that paper.

For once, it seemed as though a poet was not without honour in his own country. Press reactions indicated that thousands of Canadians appreciated the steady volume of verse glorifying the Canadian scene which has been issuing from the pen of one of the most versatile and gifted poets this country has produced. MacDonald is unique in that he has made a living entirely out of his poetry, through the sales of his books and his lectures and readings. Canadian Poetry Magazine joins his friends everywhere in wishing him continued strength and inspiration to carry on for many years to come.

L. C.

Book Notices

"The Tower" (Fourth Year) — Ryerson Press, $1.00.

This is the fourth year of publication of the selection of verse by friends and associates of McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. It contains a brief message from John Masefield, O.M., and the following foreword by Dr. Lorne Pierce — that wonderful champion of Canadian poets: —

"A decade or so ago the publication of poetry in Canada was confined to a few periodicals, and was sponsored by two or three book publishers. Today, Canadian poets are still greatly in need of more and better outlets, but there is a growing company of year-books, chap-books, and college-sponsored collections, the "little magazines". Canadian poets and artists are still the most creative and distinctive contributors to our national culture, yet they have had to fight for their lives.

Amid the profuse flowering of Canadian verse it is good to see the survival of "The Tower". Not only has it managed to exist, but, what is more important, it has succeeded in being alive. "The Tower" in its fourth year is more mature, better in many ways, than the first issue. There is a deeper understanding of people, and a more competent sharing of experience.

Friends of this brave venture hope that it may become the trysting place of a wide circle of poets — the Niagara peninsula rich in history and legend, and then West and South. May there be no end to its growth or any limit to its dominion."

The range of subjects in this 24-page booklet is vast and ambitious. Some of the most effective pieces are by Marjorie Wilkinson, Jean B. McCallion, and Ruth Cleaves Hazelton. The entire collection is surprisingly good.

EDITOR.

"Mobiles" (1955), by Thecla Bradshaw, in Chap-Book 161, Ryerson Press, Toronto, $1.00.

In the twelve reflective lyrics of *Mobiles* the author is almost painfully aware that what men do furnishes subject matter for the poet and that the mission of the poet is to record and interpret the doings of men. She is not always sufficiently aware that there is no poetry unless the record and the interpretation are *communicated* in language that is clear and moving as well as original. The title poem received honourable mention in a 1955 Canadian Poetry Competition in Winnipeg. Had the author been more concerned about communication and less about exhibitionism, as in "Song 11", she might have won first place. "Remember Together", (1955), by Myrtle Reynolds Adams, is Chap-Book 162, Ryerson Press, Toronto, $1.00.

This chap-book contains fourteen delightfully original yet clear and powerful emotional and reflective lyrics, the majority of them reprinted from standard American and Canadian periodicals, and mostly stimulated by contact with nature through the day and through the seasons of the year.

V. B. R.

NOTE:

Arthur S. Bourinot, former editor of this magazine writes to say:

"My "Five Canadian Poets" is now sold out. For some reason there is still a demand for it, so a limited reprint will be ready in about a month".

JUST PUBLISHED

EDWARD WILLIAM THOMSON

(1849-1924)

Author of "Old Man Savarin" etc.,

• • •

A Bibliography with Notes
and Some Letters

BY

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Plan Now To Attend!

CAA CONVENTION

JUNE 25 to 28 1956

at HALIFAX, Nova Scotia

Dalhousie University

Room and board at Shirreff Hall, Dalhousie University

Rate will be $6.00 per day, room and meals

Send reservations to:

Miss Phyllis Blakeley, 88 Connaught Ave., Halifax, N.S.

Here are some of the Speakers, Guests—

Graham Allen *(Dalhousie Review)*
Ralph Allen *(MacLean,s)*
Margaret and Leslie G. Barnard
Dr. W. R. Bird
Leo Cox *(Canadian Poetry)*
Max "Rawhide" Ferguson
Blair Fraser *(MacLean's)*
Stuart Trueman *(St. John Telegraph)*
Alice Frick *(CBC Toronto)*
H. Gordon Green *(Family-Herald-Weekly Star)*
L. W. Janes *(Newfoundland Quarterly)*
Dr. Watson Kirkconnell *(Acadia Univ.)*
Thomas Raddall
Evelyn Richardson
Lionel Shapiro

Here are Entertainment Highlights—

A cruise at sea on a destroyer. . . Visit to Citadel Hill Museum. . . Trip to Sam Slick's home. . . Tea at Government House. . . Luncheon by city at Lord Nelson Hotel . . . Luncheon at Acadia University, Wolfville. . . and other interesting events! (Plus the Governor General Awards Dinner, by Province of Nova Scotia)

SPECIAL NOTE: Presidents of CAA branches are requested to canvass their members who are planning a railway trip. We can get a reduced fare rate if we can muster fifty or more riders. Let reservations committee know soon as possible.

SET ASIDE THAT IMPORTANT CAA CONVENTION DATE

JUNE 25 to 28, 1956 !

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